

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

Table of Content

Program Description --- Page 1	Equal Opportunity --- Page 5
Staff --- Page 1	Field Trips --- Page 5
Absence --- Page 2	Kindergarten --- Page 5
Accident Insurance --- Page 2	Meals --- Page 5
Accident Policy --- Page 2	Medical Policies --- Page 5
Addresses and Telephone Numbers --- Page 2	Outdoor Play --- Page 6
Adjustments --- Page 2	Parental Grievance Procedure --- Page 7
Birthdays --- Page 2	Parent Participation --- Page 7
Budget --- Page 3	Parking Permits --- Page 8
Calendar --- Page 3	Selection of the POPI Board / Board Meetings --- Page 8
Clothing --- Page 3	Separation --- Page 8
Communication --- Page 3	Snow Policy --- Page 9
Discipline Policy --- Page 4	Tuition --- Page 9
Drop-off and Pick-up Procedure --- Page 4	Visiting Alumni --- Page 9
Emergency Policy --- Page 4	What to Send for your Child --- Page 9
Enrollment / Termination of Enrollment --- Page 4	

Program Description:

POPI is an on-site childcare program located on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. Our school has a long history of commitment to excellence in childcare and in meeting the needs of the community. The school was established in 1973 and was incorporated as a non-profit corporation named Parents of Preschoolers, Incorporated (POPI) in 1975. The Board of Directors is comprised of parents who oversee the operations of the school. Originally, the school opened with 18 children enrolled. Today, through several expansions of space and staff, 85 preschoolers and 25 Kindergarteners ranging in the age of two and a half to five years are enrolled. Starting in September, 2003, 30 children will be added within the ages of 6 weeks to 2 years.

POPI is licensed by the State of Maryland's Department of Human Resources Child Care Administration as a childcare facility, and the school is accredited as a preschool and a kindergarten by the Maryland Board of Education. The school also holds a certificate of accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our program provides year-round services. Our hours of operation are from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are closed on all Federal holidays. The school provides well balance, nutritious meals for breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack.

The school follows a daily routine that includes various planned activities, time for free play, time to enjoy our outdoor space, and a nap after lunch. The children nap from 1:30 to 3:00 and have a snack when they wake up. We play outside all year round. The school has an outside area with a garden, swings and climbers, and an asphalt path for riding bikes, playing ball, and much more.

The tuition for the school is based on a sliding fee scale. Fees are determined according to family size and income. The NIH Preschool is committed to quality care at an affordable price.

Staff:

The school has an excellent staff of experienced teachers with backgrounds in Early Childhood Education. They are a caring and dedicated group of individuals. As you share your children with us and we become part of your extended family, we hope that you will have the opportunity to not only get to know your child's teacher, but also the other teachers, as well as the office staff.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

The Executive Director is Ms. Paulina Alvarado. The Associate Director and Preschool Coordinator is Ms. Lucretia Berlinski. The Infant/Toddler Program Coordinator and office administrative manager is Ms. Nandini Nagendran. The school utilizes the help of interested and committed volunteers from the community. We have student teachers from the University of Maryland and Montgomery Community college. Volunteers come to us from such local agencies as the Red Cross, the NIH Volunteer Program, and the Montgomery County Volunteer Bureau.

On the following pages you will find the policies of POPI listed in alphabetical order:

Absence:

Please call the school before 9:00 a.m. if your child will be absent or late. Teachers need this information if, for example, they are waiting for a child to arrive before doing an activity, and the office needs this information for a lunch count.

Accident Insurance:

Your child is insured for accidents during the time that he/she is at the school and including field trips.

Accident Policy:

Action taken is dependent on the nature of the injury. A minor scrape is washed with antibacterial soap and water. A more serious but still minor cut or bump that results in a slight swelling requires the staff member to fill out an accident report, and appropriate action is taken, i.e., ice applied. Any accident that results in an injury more serious than a bump or cut or that involves the child's head or face requires staff to notify parents by phone immediately. All staff are trained in pediatric CPR and have first aid training.

Addresses and Telephone Numbers:

The Director must be advised if there is a change in your address and/or your home or office telephone number. The names, addresses and telephone numbers of persons who can be contacted in case of an emergency (if neither parent is available), must be provided, as well as the names of persons who are authorized to pick up your child.

Please note: The school's telephone number is (301) 496-5144

Adjustments:

We realize parents and children need time to adjust to a new school. To facilitate this adjustment we have a few suggestions. We ask that parents take time to meet their child's teacher or teachers before they begin school. We can set up a telephone conference if this is more convenient for you. Secondly, children need to spend a morning visiting their new classroom prior to their enrollment. This alleviates anxiety for the children, as they will know what to expect when they go to school on their first day. Finally, if at all possible, we ask parents to shorten your child's school day the first few days. This can mean picking them up after nap (3:30) or before 4:30.

Please feel free to call the school anytime during the day to check on your child. We ask, however, that you do not drop-in during the first few weeks as this means the child will have to deal with separating from you twice in one day.

Birthdays:

You are invited to help your child celebrate his/her birthday. Your child's teacher will tell you at what time the class holds its parties and what to bring. If you do bring party favors, (though they are not necessary) please bring the same thing for girls and boys.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

Budget:

The NIH Preschool's operating funds are derived from three sources; 1) tuition; 2) the Maryland Child and Adult Food Care Program; and 3) fund raising and private contributions. No Federal funds are available to supplement the preschool's budget. Tuition paid by parents represents the greatest portion of the school's income.

Calendar:

We are open Monday through Friday, fifty-two weeks a year, from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., except for the following Federal holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Washington's Birthday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

In addition, the school will be closed for three (3) professional days during the year. One of these days will be the day before the Montgomery County Public schools open in the fall, the day after Thanksgiving day and the day before or after Christmas day. A calendar of school events including holiday parties, the Thanksgiving Pot Luck Dinner, open house, summer picnic, etc., will be available at the beginning of each school year.

Please note: Full Tuition is due for all weeks in which holidays or professional days occur.

Clothing:

Please label all of your child's clothing. A complete set of extra clothing should be available at the school; even an extra pair of shoes and socks proves useful. Please wash and return any clothes not belonging to your child that he/she might bring home. We have an ever-dwindling supply of extra clothing. We are happy to accept donations of clothing your child has outgrown!!

Children should be dressed properly during cold winter months, layers work well. Hats and mittens (no gloves please!!) are mandatory. Please send shoe/snow boots and snowsuits on snow days since we go outside and let the children frolic in the snow. Boots are also useful during our spring "mud" season. It is helpful to have a sweater at school, especially in the spring and fall, when the temperatures vary throughout the day. During the summer months your child will need a bathing suit and a towel to enjoy our outdoor water play activities. An outdoor cubby is provided to store each child's towel and swimsuit.

Casual clothing that can withstand the wear and tear of an active day is encouraged for both boys and girls. Our children are very active and play in sand, mud, paint, etc. It is also recommended that children come in "self-help" clothing. We encourage the children to dress themselves and they (and we) appreciate clothing that makes this task easier.

Communication:

In addition to his/her cubby, each child has a mailbox outside their classroom - PLEASE CHECK IT DAILY. You will frequently find letters from the office, as well as notes from your child's teachers and your child's artwork. Checking your child's mailbox and reading the notes on the Parent Bulletin Board as you enter the school are ways to keep in touch with the school's news and events.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

Discipline Policy:

The NIH Preschool strives to create a safe and challenging environment where children experience a minimum of stress and frustration. Children observe teachers behaving with respect will learn to behave respectfully themselves. All these factors combine to diminish the need for "discipline". When a conflict does arise, children are encouraged to use words and to solve problems among themselves. A teacher may supply words for younger children. A teacher will always be aware of the situation. If children are unable to resolve conflict or the disagreement becomes physical, a teacher will intervene. Finally, if a child becomes too upset they will be given a time-out. Teachers will use appropriate language to discuss children's behavior with children.

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedure:

Please take your child all the way into the classroom in the morning. Children arriving before their own classroom is open will be assigned to a specific classroom for the early morning hours. In the afternoon, please check with the staff person who has the attendance sheets when you pick up your child. We can only allow children to leave the school with an adult who has been authorized or a parent. We must have this authorization in writing. Children should be picked up by 6:00PM. There is a charge on \$5 for first 15mins.....every 5 minutes, and \$10 every 5 minutes thereafter. The school insurance policy and NIH policy does not permit children to be in the building after 6:00pm.

Emergency Policy:

In the event of an evacuation from Building 64, the children will be taken to the Building 45 (Natcher).

In the event of a tornado warning or watch, all children will be moved into the all purpose room, the room with no windows. They will remain there until the warning or watch is over. The NIH fire department will notify the school when a warning or watch is in effect.

Enrollment / Termination of Enrollment:

Enrollment:

The childcare center is available only to families who work at NIH or other Federal agency. If the parents leave NIH or the Federal agency, then the child cannot be at POPI any longer. Siblings and children from Childkind, Inc. are given priority for enrollment at POPI.

Termination of Enrollment:

The Preschool reserves the right to suspend or, in an extreme situation, terminate a child's enrollment if and when his/her behavior is deemed to be detrimental or destructive to the normal functioning of the program. Termination shall take place only with the approval of the Board of Directors and only after all efforts to resolve the difficulties have failed.

The following procedures for child dismissal will be followed in the event that a teacher perceives that the program does not meet the needs of the child. The teacher will:

1. Bring discussion of the problem to a staff meeting to get additional input and identify a consistent approach among staff members for working with the child.
2. Staff members will notify the parent(s) when a problem arises and hold a conference with the involved parent(s) and staff within two school days of the problem being brought to the staff meeting.
3. Teachers will document through written observation, the child's behavior and/or needs throughout at least two separate school days. These observations will be shared with the child's parent(s).

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

4. There will be an option of moving the child to a different classroom at the discretion of the teacher and the Director, after notification to the parent(s).
5. In the event after steps 1-4 have been attempted, the NIH Preschool determines it cannot meet the needs of the child, it reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment. The school will refund any deposits or tuition payments, pro-rated as of the date of termination.
6. Also, if the parent is no longer NIH/Federal employee.

Equal Opportunity:

Children are admitted to the NIH Preschool without preference to race, creed, sex or socioeconomic status. No discrimination is practiced in the treatment of the children in the school or in the program administration or operation. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate children who have been identified with special needs.

Field Trips:

Field trips are an important part of our curriculum. For local trips, parents and teachers will drive the children in their cars. Whenever a child leaves the school, parents will be notified and are required to provide written consent. All children under forty-pounds, or who are under four years of age, are required to be in a car seat. Seatbelts will be used for all children over forty-pounds. Parents are welcome on trips and we invite you to join your child's class on an excursion. On certain occasions, like, to the swimming pool or trips to places not so close-by.....county busses are used.....under the supervision of the staff members.

Kindergarten:

The kindergarten school year follows the school year set by Montgomery County Public Schools. The children will begin the same day as the first day of Montgomery County Public Schools and they will graduate from POPI on the Friday following the last day of public school.

Meals:

We provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Breakfast usually consists of cereal, milk and fruit. Teachers often cook eggs, French toast, waffles, and a variety of other foods with the children. Lunch consists of a protein, a vegetable, bread, milk, and fruit. Weekly menus are posted on a bulletin board located in the front hall. A nutritious snack is offered after naptime. Please do not send food to school with your child. We make a concerted effort to provide nutritious meals and snacks to minimize sweets and junk food. If your child is on a special diet for religious or health reasons, you may wish to supplement our meals.

Parents are welcome to have lunch with their children; the cost is \$3.00. Please let your child's teacher know in advance if you will be having lunch in the classroom. The lunch policy is flexible and teachers frequently allow visits without such notice if there are no conflicting considerations.

Please check with your child's teacher before you make plans with your child. The office also needs to be notified so we may order an extra lunch for you. You may enjoy taking your child to lunch in the Natcher cafeteria. When you join us for lunch, we hope you will feel at home. Having a parent for lunch is a special treat for your child as well as for the other children in the room.

Medical Policies:

A. Medical Requirements

A child is required to have had a physical examination within 3 months prior to enrolling in the school. The State and County require a medical record fully completed by a licensed physician.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

B. Immunizations

The following immunizations are required before admission to the NIH Preschool:

1. Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DPT) - 4 immunizations
2. Polio - 3 doses
3. Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib) - at least one dose after age 12 months
4. Hepatitis B - 3 vaccinations
5. Measles -Mumps-Rubella (MMR) - one dose must have been given after the first birthday
6. Varicella - One dose

C. Medication

The staff will administer medication prescribed for your child by a physician. The pharmacy or health practitioner must label the prescription medication with your child's name, an expiration date, and the dosage. Your child must have had at least one dose of the prescription medication at home. Forms, which give permission to the staff to administer medicine, are available on the Parent Bulletin Board or in the office. You may of course, come to school and give your child medicine personally.

D. Illness

Please call the school if your child will be absent due to illness, and specify the illness. Do not send your child to the center if he/she has had a temperature above 100.5 degrees (37.75 C) within the past 24 hours. A child will not be admitted to school if they have diarrhea, vomiting, or a severe cold with cough and nasal discharge. If your child develops a fever while at the school or shows other signs of illness, you will be required to take him/her home.

E. Communicable Diseases

Parents are required to notify the Director immediately when their child develops a communicable disease such as mumps, chicken pox, rubella, lice or scabies. Health information is provided to the school by the Maryland Department of Human Resources through the Child Care Administration. This information is communicated to the parents, as required, for the prevention of disease and to insure the health protection of the children. Parents will be informed of any communicable diseases, which have occurred among the children and the appropriate measures to minimize spread will be taken.

If your child has head lice, you will be required to take him/her home and use a medicated shampoo. Your child will not be readmitted to the school until they are free of lice and nits. In addition, all clothing and bedding will be sent home with your child. If there is a case of lice in your child's class, you will be asked to take home and wash any items that may be affected.

F. Medical Emergencies

Emergency forms must be signed by parents to allow staff to provide emergency care. Every effort will be made to contact the parents immediately in the event of an emergency. If the parents cannot be reached, the child will be taken to Suburban Hospital.

G. Child Abuse and Neglect

As professionals, teachers are required by law to report and suspected cases of abuse or neglect.

Outdoor Play:

Outdoor play is one of the essential parts of our program and we do go outside every day, all year round. In nice weather, we are out as much as possible using the outdoors as our classroom. During winter months, we go

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

outdoors twice a day. Please dress your child in warm clothing and help him/her learn the "over the head" method of pulling on a coat. Please, if your child is not well enough to go outside, keep them home.

Parental Grievance Procedures:

Communication between parents and staff is instrumental in assuring the best possible experience for your child and for your family. In the event that other suggestions outlined in this handbook elsewhere are not sufficient in avoiding conflict, the following grievance procedures will be followed:

1. When a problem arises, the parent(s) have the option of scheduling a meeting (which will be held within two working days) with any of the following:
 - a. The child's teacher
 - b. The Preschool Director
 - c. The Personnel Officer and one other Board member
2. If the parent(s) chooses not to meet with the teachers or the Director, the Personnel Officer will communicate with school personnel to let them know of the problem. If parent(s) meet with teachers and/or the Director, the Personnel Officer will be kept apprised of the situation.
3. If the problem is not resolved, the parent(s) may request a meeting with the board of Directors.
4. If the Board of Directors does not resolve the problem after following the above procedures, you may contact the NIH Child Care Programs Specialist, WEPB, DSS, ORS on (301) 402-8180 to discuss your situation and receive consultation. The NIH Child Care Program Specialist does not have the authority to overrule a judgment decision made by the Board of Directors, however they can offer their assistance to the Board in identifying alternate resolution tactics for future similar issues should they arise.
5. At the end of this process, after every effort has been made to reach a resolution, parents may terminate their child's enrollment and waive the one-month notification.

Parent Participation:

The NIH Preschool encourages parent participation at all levels from the corporate to the classroom. Corporate participation may come through serving on the Board of Directors or on a committee, working on fundraising activities or by serving as a Classroom representative.

We hope you will feel comfortable visiting in your child's classroom. Spending time with your child, especially at the beginning or the end of the day, helps ease the child's transition between home and school and validates his world. Lunch times are a nice, sociable time for a visit.

We have had parents come in to share their musical talents and to introduce us to songs, foods and holidays from other cultures.

We hold many special activities throughout the year that are designed to help parents get acquainted with their child's class and with their teachers and friends. In the spring, we hold an open house and our annual school picnic. Each class will hold one or more potluck dinners during the year. At Thanksgiving, we have a school-wide international potluck dinner. We invite parents to our special holiday celebrations as well as our end of the year "Happy Trails" party.

A few years ago, we began a parent "work day" that was very successful and will be planned twice a year (during the spring and the fall) to allow parents to help with chores that need to be done at the school. In years past, parents have put together a new playhouse, washed and mended the dress-up clothing, and helped with some of the painting projects.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

Parking Permits:

Special permits that allow drop-off and pick-up of children outside of Building 64, in the designated parking spaces are issued annually and can be obtained from the Director or office.

Parking in any undesignated space can result in a \$30.00 parking ticket. Permits MUST be returned when your child leaves the Center.

Selection of the POPI Board / Board Meetings

The POPI Board consists of parents of children enrolled at POPI. The Board members are elected by the parents, by a process of voting. The POPI Director sends request for parents to stand for Board position elections and the parents respond accordingly.....whoever wishes to be on the Board, sends in their names with a bio-data of themselves. The elections are held in October.

Meetings:

A. Corporation Meetings

Two meetings of the members of the Corporation shall be held during the period commencing September 1 and ending August 31 of the following year. The first meeting will be held in the month of October for the purpose of communication with the members and the introduction of the Board of Directors. The second meeting will be held 6 months later (during the month of April) to update members on the status of the Corporation.

B. Board Meetings

Board meetings are held monthly at the school. Parents are welcome and strongly encouraged to attend. Minutes from the Board meetings are posted on the Parent Bulletin Board in the front hall. The schedule for meetings is decided annually by the Board and will be posted.

C. Committee Meetings

The Committee Chair schedules committee meetings. The Fiscal Management, and Personnel and Long Range Planning Committees are standing committees and have scheduled meetings. The Fundraising Committee meets as necessary.

D. Parent Orientation Meeting

Our Parent Orientation Meeting is held in September. The meeting is informal and allows for open discussion. A few of the topics we like to discuss may include our philosophy, a typical day at the school, clothing, communication, parent participation and outdoor play.

Separation:

Children approach new situations in many different ways. Some walk right in and it seems as if they have always been there. Others may cry for a while, even as long as a few weeks. Sometimes children have a great first week and then it hits them that this is forever! However it affects your child, we are a custom to dealing with separation. Sometimes separation is as hard on parents as it is on children. Here are some tips to make your first days easier:

- Feel free after checking with your child's teacher, to spend a little time in the room with your child.
- When you are ready to leave, say goodbye and make a quick exit.
- If you have left a crying child and are concerned about how he/she is doing, you are welcome to call us so that we can let you know how they are doing.

Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) - PARENT HANDBOOK

Snow Policy:

The school will follow the Federal Government closings on all snow days. On the days when federal workers have unscheduled leave the school will open one hour late, at 8:30 am. In the event of an early closing due to inclement weather, the school will also close. We will call you to inform you of any closing. Parents must pick up their children as soon as possible.

Tuition:

Tuition is based on a sliding fee scale established by the Board of directors of POPI. The sliding fee scale is reviewed annually by the Director as well as the Board. You will receive an enrollment agreement annually that will specify your fee based on documentation which you are required to provide the school.

Tuition is due every other Tuesday, and payments are for the two week period which begins the following Monday. Individuals making payments after Friday of the week in which the tuition is due will be assessed a \$10.00 late fee, unless previous arrangements have been made with the Director. Parents will be assessed a \$6.50 fee for returned checks. Should this occur twice, cash or a money order will be required for four successive tuition payments.

A two-week deposit is required when the child is accepted into the school. This deposit is applicable to the child's last two weeks tuition upon receipt of a thirty days written notification of termination.

Tuition payments must be made even though a child is absent for vacation or due to illness. In some cases of extended illness, fee adjustments may be made following discussion with the Director.

Visiting Alumni:

1. Both the Director and the classroom teacher must approve all visits.
2. Only one child may visit a classroom per day.
3. All visitors must be picked up by 4:30.
4. The cost is \$20.00 for a half-day visit and \$40.00 for a full day visit. The fee must be paid on or before the day the child visits.

What to Send for Your Child:

In addition to a complete change of clothes, your child will need a small sleeping bag, sheet or blanket for naptime, with a bag to store it in. If your child has a favorite stuffed animal or other sleeping toy, you are welcome to send it. Please do not send other toys to school. Young children often have a hard time sharing their toys with their friends, and lost or broken toys are a frequent consequence. If you find any little toys, puzzle pieces, Lego parts or bristle blocks, etc., which have wandered into your child's pockets, please return them.